

Message Text

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ACTION FBOE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 A-01 SCA-01 PER-03 MMO-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2529

INFO USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 1942

FOR FBO; ARA/EX; SCA (HENNEMEYER) FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ABLD AFSP ACON HA

SUBJ: PROPOSED CONSULAR QUARTERS

1. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, OUR ABILITY TO PROVIDE PROMPT, EFFICIENT CONSULAR SERVICES AT THIS NOTORIOUSLY HIGH FRAUD POST, WHERE NIV APPLICATION RATE CONTINUES TO ESCALATE, HAS BEEN SEVERELY CURTAILED THE THE ILL-DESIGNED AND CRAMPED LEASED QUARTERS IN THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUILDING.

2. OUR CONSULAR OFFICERS WORK UNDER CONSTANT STRAIN FROM PRESSURES OF A VOCAL, DEMANDING AND OFTEN DESPERATE PUBLIC. SOME LOSS OF OBJECTIVITY IN EVALUATING APPLICANT'S ELIGIBILITY IS INEVITABLE, NOTWITHSTANDING THE OFFICERS' PRODIGIOUS AND SUSTAINED EFFORTS, WHEN AN INTERVIEW CANNOT BE CONDUCTED IN A CALM AND APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS. INDEED, IT IS NOT TOO MUCH TO SAY THAT THESE BELOW STANDARD WORKING QUARTERS CONSTITUTE A DEFINITE HAZARD TO THE HEALTH OF OUR EMPLOYEES.

3. THE APPOINTMENT SYSTEM, TO WHICH WE RESORTED EARLY THIS YEAR AS A MEANS OF RESTORING ORDER AND EQUITY WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT WALK-IN SYSTEM

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WAS NOT FEASIBLE UNDER EXISTING SPACE LIMITATIONS,

HAS ACHIEVED SOME OF ITS OBJECTIVES, BUT DURING HEAVY SUMMER TRAVEL SEASON OFTEN LACKS FLEXIBILITY TO DEAL WITH LAST MINUTE TRAVEL OF BONA FIDE STUDENTS OR BUSINESSMEN. MOREOVER, IT HAS PROMPTED PUBLIC CRITICISM SINCE OUTSIDE WAITING AREA OF CONSULAR ANNEX PROVIDES LITTLE IF ANY SHELTER FROM TROPICAL ELEMENTS. WE HAVE SEEN INCREASING PRESS CRITICISM OF OUR VISA OPERATIONS, MUCH OF IT UNWARRANTED, BUT NEVERTHELESS SERIOUS ENOUGH TO CONSTITUTE A POTENTIAL POLITICAL PROBLEM.

4. WE HAVE CONCLUDED, THEREFORE, THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO WAIT UNTIL FY 78 WHEN CONSTRUCTION ON PROJECTED CONSULAR ANNEX IS DUE TO START. WE HAVE THEREFORE CONDUCTED INTENSIVE SEARCH FOR NEW QUARTERS AND, BY A STROKE OF EXCEPTIONAL GOOD FORTUNE, HAVE FOUND A NEARLY COMPLETED AND THUS FAR UNRENTED NEW BUILDING WITH THE SPACE (11,000 SQUARE FEET), CENTRAL LOCATION, AND INTERIOR DESIGN FLEXIBILITY WE NEED FOR BOTH CONSULAR AND USIS OPERATIONS. THIS BUILDING, IN BRIEF, MEETS ALL THE NEEDS PROJECTED IN OUR FY 78 CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM AND PROVIDES THEM AT LEAST FOUR YEARS EARLIER, AT A TIME WHEN WE URGENTLY REQUIRE THE SPACE, AND AT A SAVINGS TO USG OF AT LEAST \$500,000 IN FINAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS IF WE SHOULD BUY BUILDING NOW.

5. NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE OWNER REVEAL HIS WILLINGNESS TO SELL THE PROPERTY TO THE USG AT AN ESTIMATED COST OF \$500,000. IF IMMEDIATE PURCHASE CAN NOT BE AUTHORIZED, THE OWNER IS WILLING TO ENTER INTO A RENTAL AGREEMENT WITH A TWO YEAR OPTION ON OUR PART TO PURCHASE. IF THE OPTION IS EXERCISED, A PORTION OF THE ANNUAL RENTAL (ESTIMATED AT \$45,000 TO \$50,000 PER ANNUM - FIGURES NOT YET FIRM) WOULD BE APPLIED TO THE FINAL PURCHASE COST. PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES TO MODIFY THE BUILDING TO MEET SECURITY REQUIREMENTS (GRILLS, LIGHTS), AIR CONDITIONING, TELEPHONE INSTALLATION, UNCLASSIFIED

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TELEX AND MISCELLANEOUS MOVING EXPENSES (INCLUDING SOME ADDITIONAL FURNITURE) TOTAL A ONE-TIME COST OF \$30,000.

6. DATA REQUIRED BY 6 FAM 732 ARE BEING COLLECTED AND WILL BE SUBMITTED AS SOON AS AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, A DECISION TO OBTAIN THE PROPERTY BY PURCHASE OR RENT SHOULD NOT RPT NOT BE DELAYED

PENDING RECEIPT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS. IN AN ECONOMY WHERE FEW NEW BUILDINGS SUITABLE FOR OFFICES ARE BEING CONSTRUCTED, WHERE SPACE DEMANDS ARE INCREASING, WHERE CONSTRUCTION COSTS ARE INCREASING BY 20 PERCENT PER YEAR, THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN SUCH A DESIRABLE PROPERTY CANNOT BE POSTPONED. IT IS AVAILABLE TODAY. BECAUSE OF OTHERS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE PROPERTY, IT MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE TOMORROW.

7. RECOMMENDATION: I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO PURCHASE OR LEASE THIS PROPERTY WITHOUT DELAY.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: A. FBO TO AUTHORIZE THE POST TO ENTER INTO IMMEDIATE NEGOTIATIONS TO PURCHASE THE PROPERTY, OR IF UNABLE TO DO SO,
B. THE BUREAU TO AUTHORIZE THE POST TO ENTER INTO A SHORT-TERM LEASE (FIVE YEARS) AND MAKE AVAILABLE THE NECESSARY FUNDS FOR ONE YEAR'S RENT IN ADVANCE, PLUS \$30,000 FOR MODIFICATIONS AS SET FORTH IN PARA 5.
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